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New International Anti-Piracy Caucus Will Combat Theft of American Intellectual Property

Caucus Unveils "2003 International Anti-Piracy Watch List"

A bipartisan group of leading House and Senate lawmakers today announced the launch of The Congressional International Anti-Piracy Caucus, which is dedicated to working with America's international trade partners to secure the enactment of strong copyright laws and the vigilant enforcement of those laws. The Congressional Co-Chairs of the Caucus include Senators Gordon Smith (R-OR), and Joe Biden (D-DE) and Congressmen Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) and Adam Schiff (D-CA).

The Caucus will support congressional efforts to deal with the problem of piracy and Administration efforts to obtain strong intellectual property protections in the context of international trade agreements.

The Caucus will provide: Briefings for Congressional delegations traveling to countries with significant piracy problems; Staff and member briefings and forums on international intellectual property protection and piracy; Demonstrations of new technologies and products designed to improve consumers' entertainment experiences and to reduce piracy; and will work closely with the committees of jurisdiction in the House and Senate on related hearings and legislation.

"The economic impact of piracy is felt on every level - from the artist to the far-reaching effects of trade deficits," said Senator Smith. "Bootleggers and black marketers steal not only tangible merchandise but more importantly, ideas and creativity."

America is the largest creator, producer, and exporter of copyrighted material.

"The rising theft of American intellectual property, through piracy and counterfeiting, has cost American jobs numbering in the hundreds of thousands, and has cost the U.S. government tax revenues and U.S. corporations billions of dollars," said Senator Biden. "American innovation and creativity need to be protected by our government, just like our personal property, our homes and streets need government protection. This caucus will help us find new ways to reduce the scourge of piracy abroad."

Congressman Goodlatte said, "The U.S. is far and away the world's largest producer and exporter of the creative works that entertain, inform and educate the world. In addition, the contribution of the American copyright industry to the strength of the overall American economy is significant. A vibrant sector of the U.S. economy is at tremendous risk due to widespread piracy of U.S.-made movies, music, software, videogames and other creative works. The Caucus will play an important role in defending the rights of creators and distributors to be compensated for the work that they do."

"America's greatest trade export - our Intellectual Property - is under attack both here on our own soil and globally," Rep. Schiff said. "In my district, the movie and recording industries suffer an immeasurable loss of jobs and economic revenue from the abundant spread of digital piracy. It is my hope that this new caucus will help educate members of Congress on the latest innovations to protect American ingenuity from international piracy."

The advent of digital technology holds the promise of a golden age for movies, music, video games and other forms of entertainment. More new devices for watching, listening to, recording, sharing and saving music and movies have emerged in the last decade than in the previous 100 years. And these technologies are a key to American economic growth: indeed, the combined copyright industries – movies, home video and television programming, music, books, video games and software – generate more revenues than any other single manufacturing sector, including automobiles and auto parts, aircraft and agriculture. They are responsible for more than five percent of the nation's GDP. The film industry alone has a surplus balance of trade with every country in the world.

Disturbingly, however, an explosion in piracy and a diminution in copyright protection have accompanied these exciting new advances in entertainment technology. Organized crime has become heavily involved in foreign DVD and CD piracy. Criminals are using the same formidable distribution network and resources that were developed for drug trafficking and arms smuggling. The result, in these and other countries, is a virtual evisceration of the legitimate market for American entertainment.

In an effort to combat international copyright piracy by calling attention to countries where piracy has reached alarming levels, the Caucus unveiled its "2003 International Piracy Watch List." The Caucus will monitor closely the serious problems of copyright piracy in the following five countries: Brazil, China, Pakistan, Russia and Taiwan.

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